

youngest children if we expect to have the kind of future that America deserves.

Again, let me say to all of you, I am profoundly grateful for the work that has been done. I would be remiss if I didn't mention one of my pet projects, the national service program, AmeriCorps. Last year, 87 of our national service participants, in our very first summer of service, helped to immunize over 100,000 children in Texas. And it was a pretty good investment. So we will keep doing that. We'll keep working at it. Dr. Satcher, Dr. Elders, and others will keep spreading the word. But we know in the end, our ability to succeed depends upon the ability of grass-roots-based community organizations to reach everybody in a disciplined way.

When I saw Secretary Riley sitting out here, I leaned over to Hillary and I said, "You know, you'd think that as long as we've been married, we've been asked and answered all the questions." I said, "Did you ever get any shots in school?" *[Laughter]* And she said, "Yes, I did." And I got my shots in school. That's where I got them. And then I got to thinking, listening to everybody talk, that our generation, all of us baby boomers, who are often known for other things, have a great debt to the immunization movement. We were the first generation of children in the very first year to be immunized against polio. My daughter cannot imagine what it's like to go to school as a first grader and be terrified that you're going to get polio and spend the rest of your life in an iron lung. But all of us grew up with that. Surely, those of us who have tangible, personal experience from the benefits of immunization can at long last solve this problem.

When I was a young man, I read a book by a southern author named James Agee about the Great Depression called, "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men." Some of you may have seen it. It also has some of the most astonishing photographs ever taken by an American photographer, a man named Walker Evans. In this book, James Agee said something that I have carried with me for a long time now, and I'd like to close with these remarks and then get on with the business at hand. He said, in every child who is born, no matter what circumstances and no matter what parents, the potentiality of

the whole human race is born again, and in him, too, once more, and of each of us, our terrific responsibility toward human life, toward the utmost idea of goodness, of the horror of error, and of God. That is what we are here about today. And we are bound to do a better job.

I now want to sign a proclamation designating National Infant Immunization Week. And once we've done that, we're going to see an example of what it is we are all talking about. We are going to see the first infant of the week being immunized, right up here by Dr. Mohammed Akhter, the public health commissioner of the District of Columbia. The parents are Laura Loeb and Howard Morse, and their wonderful little daughter, Elizabeth. And for all of you here who are squeamish, relax; she is not going to be immunized with a shot. For all of us who had only shots in immunization, we sort of resent it, but—*[laughter]*—modern medical practice has permitted the public alleviation of pain. So let me sign the proclamation, and then we'll have the immunization.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:27 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Betty Bumpers, cofounder, and Lori Riegle, spokeswoman, Every Child By Two; Dr. Robert Johnson, director of adolescent and young adult medicine, New Jersey Medical School; Dr. David Satcher, Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Proclamation 6675—National Infant Immunization Week

April 20, 1994

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

One of my Georgetown University professors, Otto Hentz, S.J., has written, "There is no greater gesture of trust than when children expectantly thrust their arms up in the air, telling us in the universal language of toddlers, 'Pick me up.' And when we follow this command, we witness the complete serenity of children, their perfect trust that they will

not be dropped. This is an astonishing vote of confidence. . . .”

To guarantee that our children's faith in us is justified, we must renew our commitment to protect them from deadly infectious diseases. Unfortunately, less than two-thirds of American children under age 2 have received all the immunizations they need. In some inner city and rural areas, vaccination rates are much lower than in more urban communities. The unnecessary illnesses resulting from this failure are a health disaster and a human tragedy.

To prevent suffering and to save lives, my Administration has taken new steps to protect our youngest children. In April 1993, I submitted to the Congress the “Comprehensive Child Immunization Act,” significant portions of which were enacted into law last year. In addition, our Childhood Immunization Initiative is the most sweeping childhood immunization plan in American history. This proposal includes free vaccines for needy children, increased funding to cities and States to improve the service delivery infrastructure, enhanced disease detection and immunization monitoring systems, and an aggressive national outreach program.

This Initiative will mobilize every community to practice disease prevention on a grand scale. It will allow us to increase vaccination levels for 2-year-old children from the current 64 percent to at least 90 percent and to build a vaccine delivery system that will maintain these achievements within a reformed health care system.

Adults responsible for safeguarding our youngest children must be made aware of the seriousness of this problem. Many parents do not realize that more than 80 percent of all recommended vaccinations should be given before a child is 2 years old—long before he or she begins school. We must make sure that every parent is informed that between the ages of 2 months and 2 years of age their children will require five visits to a doctor or clinic to assure their proper immunization. Doctors must also help by educating the public about the importance of immunizations and by making sure that the children under their care are monitored carefully to ensure full protection.

Last year, I proclaimed the last week of April as National Preschool Immunization Week. This year, as part of the effort to focus greater attention on the need to immunize children before their second birthday, I have changed the name of the observance to National Infant Immunization Week.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim the last full week of April 1994 and in all succeeding years as National Infant Immunization Week. I call upon all Americans, especially parents and health care providers, to do their part to help in this crucial effort and to observe this week annually with appropriate activities and recognition ceremonies.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eighteenth.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 22.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Chancellor Franz Vranitzky of Austria

April 20, 1994

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, are the allies on board now for your new Bosnia policy—strategy?

The President. Well, I've talked to President Yeltsin and President Mitterrand today, and Prime Minister Chrétien. And I have not talked to Chancellor Kohl or to Prime Minister Major today. I haven't been able to get them, but I talked to them in the last couple of days. And I'll have more to—they were all good conversations and I'll—as you know, I'm going to make a statement after I meet with Chancellor Vranitzky.